

CANADIAN CHURCH NEWS NOTES

The following is the first installment of the CANADA CHURCH NEWS NOTES, designed especially for those interested in religious news pertaining to Canada. It is written by Vince Londoni (vlondini@bethelbaptist.ca), Bethel Baptist Church, London, Ontario, and is published by Way of Life Literature's Fundamental Baptist Information Service (FBIS). For instructions on how to unsubscribe to the FBIS or to change mailing addresses, please consult the information paragraph at the end.

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CANADIANS LOSING THEIR RELIGION

A Canadian Press article dated May 13, 2003, reports that 4.8 million Canadians (16%) in the 2001 Census claim to have no religion, up from 12% ten years ago. Of those claiming no religion, 40% were aged 24 or under. The Census also counted 43% Roman Catholic, down 2%, and 29% Protestant, down 7%. Organized "Christian" religion remains the nominal affiliation of over 70% of Canadians, but other groups are on the rise.

The number reporting themselves as plain "Christian," Evangelical, or Born-again doubled to 2.6%. Also doubling were the number of Muslims, now at 2.0%, representing nearly 600,000 Canadians. Almost a million people now represent the Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh religions in Canada, most of who live in Ontario and are recent immigrants.

The English-speaking western-style nations are rapidly moving away from Gospel Christianity and its influences on their cultures. Like Canada, the UK reports 16% of its population as having no religion. As Gospel influence weakens society corrupts. New Zealand may be the country to watch in that regard as it reports 30% of its population claiming no religion.

US GAY COUPLE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF CANADIAN COURT RULINGS

The *Vancouver Sun* reported on July 21 the wedding of a US gay couple from Hawaii as the first US gay couple to be wed in Canada under British Columbia's new court ruling. Two men from Hawaii were "married" near Vancouver on Saturday, July 19. The men, one a retired US Navy officer, asserted that they were not trying to be political, but trying to get legal and social recognition for their relationship. The *Vancouver Sun* quoted one of the men as saying, "It's commitment. And validating our relationship. We both were like school kids the minute we found out we could get married. You wouldn't believe how happy we were."

It is no surprise that unsaved souls would find pleasure in perversity, Romans 1:32 explains clearly that the unrighteousness of man leads him to "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." It is unfortunate that Canadian courts would contribute to the agenda of those who would popularize and try to make socially acceptable such sin. The ruling Liberal party leadership and likely candidates for Prime Minister next year have declared they, too, will not fight against a redefinition of "marriage" to include same-sex couples. Although the current government has asked the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on the issue before it makes laws regarding it, that decision is likely years away and the ruling and direction established by activist courts will by that time be long entrenched. Canadian Christians (and Americans for that matter) need to plead with God over texts like Exodus 18:21, Judges 2:16, 2 Chronicles 19:6-7, and Psalm 2:10-12 if peradventure God would grant us righteous judges who uphold morality and truth.

WILL CANADIAN CLERGY BE FORCED TO PERFORM GAY WEDDINGS?

A Regina *Leader-Post* article on July 19 addressed this issue. Some authorities cited argued that the Canadian Constitution grants religious freedom, and that no one would be forced to violate their religious beliefs. But the article included this fact as well, "No matter what religion they belong to, most Canadian clergy combine two distinct roles when it comes to marriage ceremonies. On one hand, clergy perform purely religious marriage rituals that reflect their various faith traditions. At the same time, most clergy also agree to act as agents of the government and issue marriage licenses." One wonders if, or when, the

Canadian Government will require a policy of “equal treatment” toward gay couples from all who are licensed by it to perform marriages.

Some clergy in Canada would welcome this. “Vancouver School of Theology professor Richard Leggett was grateful for how the Liberal government's decision to change the definition of marriage to include gays and lesbians will put pressure on reluctant Christians to follow suit. ‘It will require a change in the church, because it will show that Anglicans in Vancouver who support same-sex blessings are not off the wall,’ said Leggett, an Anglican who has supported his diocese's controversial decision to approve same-sex blessings. ‘We’ve been represented in this diocese as renegades who are out of step. And this move by the federal government shows we’re not out of step in the context in which we serve. That might not be relevant to some evangelicals, but it should be relevant to Anglicans.’”

As with Adam and Eve in the Garden and Cain standing before his rejected offering, man’s guilty conscience drives him to try to legitimize his sin. While knowing he is guilty, he denies it, passes the blame, and tries to make God accept him on his own terms. Man may “pressure” his fellow man to agree that he is right, but he cannot force the God of Heaven to legitimize his sins. And, it is to the God of Heaven man must give an account.

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION MEETING IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is hosting the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) 10th Assembly in Winnipeg from July 21-31. The LWF claims to represent 63 million Lutherans worldwide and is a thoroughly ecumenical body. The opening worship service for the conference was held in St. Boniface’s Cathedral, and was the first time the LWF held such a high-level meeting in a Catholic Church. The LWF hopes to continue its dialogue with the RC Church especially in areas of recognizing each other’s priests, the role of the pope, and their disparate understanding of the sacraments. 38 delegates, mostly from African and Asian nations were denied entry visas into Canada, causing the 700+ delegates to plan a protest march to the local immigration office in Winnipeg.

“The LWF council has decided that the Tenth Assembly will explore ways to be God's instruments for healing, justice and reconciliation in the midst of brokenness in church and society; deepen the understanding and experience of the Lutheran communion by addressing differences and disparities, and by sharing gifts; commit to closer and deeper cooperation within the ecumenical movement and to life in communion as given in Christ; discern the challenges posed to the Lutheran churches in today's multicultural and multi-faith contexts; and address spiritual, social and environmental challenges provoked especially by economic globalization.”

That’s quite an agenda. Too bad it doesn’t include “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), “mark them which cause divisions...contrary to the doctrine...and avoid them” (Romans 16:17), “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11), considering them accursed that “preach any other gospel” (Galatians 1:8-9), “Preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2), or giving themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Sadly, they either don’t care or think it does.

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